

AUTONOMY AND ENERGY SECURITY IN CENTRAL ASIA: RISKS AND
IMPLICATIONS OF POLITICAL SEPARATISM IN GORNO-BADAKHSHAN, AND
CONTRIBUTING AFGHAN FACTORS

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Abstract

This study aims to determine the degree to which political separatism in Gorno-Badakhshan threatens energy security in Central Asia. To answer this question, the study employs a modified ICRG method of measuring political risk. This framework measures six variables and assigns them a rating of either “low,” “medium,” or “high” according to their significance relating to either “energy significance” or “probability of political upheaval/conflict.” Such significance is determined according to the ICRG methodology, and a final rating is given for the significance political separatism in Gorno-Badakhshan has in affecting regional energy security. The result of this study found this rating to be a “medium” level, with two primary factors contributing to this conclusion: an event of actualized political violence/widespread revolt in Gorno-Badakhshan would (1) pull Tajik security forces into a drawn-out conflict in the territory, leaving room for militants in western Tajikistan and northern Afghanistan to launch attacks on energy infrastructure in and near Tajikistan and (2), hinder the maintenance and future development of energy infrastructure within, and proximate to, GBAO’s borders.

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Introduction

Central Asia is again at a crossroads, pulled between old and new powers. Its Soviet legacy is undeniable, from its authoritarian governments to its strong economic relationships with Moscow. However, the rise of Chinese commercial investment in the region, and the country's massive expansion into new and proposed trade relationships with Central Asian republics, has seen rapid increases in Chinese regional influence. Much of this renewed interest in Central Asia concerns its vast reserves of untapped natural resources. Oil, natural gas, and uranium are increasingly sought by outside markets, and the governments of Central Asia have moved to increasingly meet this demand.

No more evident is this renewed competition than in Gorno-Badakhshan, a remote province of eastern Tajikistan. Occupying the southeastern-most corner of Central Asia, this territory serves as a microcosm in exhibiting greater regional issues, especially regarding energy security and this increased geopolitical competition between China and Russia. The significance of Gorno-Badakhshan regarding Central Asia's energy security is partially due to its vast, untapped hydroelectric potential, and strategic location proximate to three of the region's largest energy transport corridors. Two of China's largest pipelines in Central Asia run less than 30 miles from the territory's borders, solidifying the unstable Gorno-Badakhshan as one of Beijing's top security priorities in the region. Further, Gorno-Badakhshan is unique in that it operates at a distance from the control of the Tajik government, demonstrating a level of autonomy absent from any other territory in Central Asia. This autonomy is fueled by constant exercises of political separatism, from peaceful demonstrations to violent conflict. Such events are increasing in both frequency and intensity, raising concerns over their implications for greater Central Asian security and stability. These concerns over regional security, and especially energy security, are exacerbated by the emergence of a stronger, more internationally-connected

Taliban in northern Afghanistan. Together, these three issues of energy significance, political separatism, and emerging Afghan threats, are necessary to examine in the context of Gorno-Badakhshan, not only to identify and assess threats to energy security within and proximate to the territory's borders, but also to understand their implications for Central Asian security as a whole.

Purpose, Research Question(s), and Definitions

This study combines two significant issues faced by Central Asia today, and its future prosperity and stability: political autonomy and energy security. These two issues are then examined in the context of one of Central Asia's most volatile territories: Gorno-Badakhshan. Gorno-Badakhshan has never been examined regarding its significance to regional energy security, evidencing the relevance of this study.

The purpose of this study is to examine how the political separatism in Gorno-Badakhshan affects regional energy security. Regional energy security refers to issues in the region of south-eastern Central Asia, which equates to territory within about 100 miles of Gorno-Badakhshan's borders. This distance was selected as it encompasses all of Tajikistan, western Uzbekistan, and southern Kyrgyzstan. This area is also home to about half of Central Asia's entire population, and most of Chinese energy infrastructure in all Central Asia. This study will also differentiate issues of local and proximate energy security, "local" here referring to energy security issues within Gorno-Badakhshan's borders, and "proximate" referring to territory within 100 miles of its borders.

This study defines "energy security" as both the ability of governments and companies to extract and transport energy resources, and the ability of populations to maintain access to

constant, reliable sources of energy. It also refers to the development and assurance of new energy extraction, production, and transportation infrastructure.

This study defines “influence” and “significance” as the degrees to which energy resources and infrastructure in Gorno-Badakhshan (both current and proposed, and both local and proximate) impact local populations’ access to energy resources, and the ability of companies and governments to develop and maintain commercial energy projects. For example, if 9 hydropower plants supply all the electricity for Gorno-Badakhshan’s ~300,000 residents (which is the case), this infrastructure would be “highly” significant to Gorno-Badakhshan’s local energy security. If a single pipeline carried 35% of China’s imported liquid natural gas from Turkmenistan (which is the case), this infrastructure would also be “highly” significant to energy security in territories proximate to Gorno-Badakhshan. Significance must be present in both proximate and local capacities for resources and infrastructure to be considered “regionally” significant.

These definitions considered, this study’s research question is comprised of three parts, all inextricably linked in determining how political separatism in Gorno-Badakhshan affects regional energy security:

- (a)** What is the influence/significance of energy resources and infrastructure, local and proximate to Gorno-Badakhshan, on regional energy security?
- (b)**, what level of threat does political separatism and extremism in Gorno-Badakhshan pose to this regional energy security?
- and
- (c)** how do emerging security concerns in Afghanistan amplify these threats?

Literature Review

Though energy resources are foundational in the creation and maintenance of every society, the term and study of “energy security” is recent phenomenon. The variety of issues now understood as “energy security” have historically been absorbed into larger issues of infrastructure, trade, or oil supply. The first person to be widely associated with this new field was Daniel Yergin, who is still writing on topics on energy security today.

Yergin’s first foray into this subject was in 1979, when he co-authored *Energy Future: The Report of the Energy Project at the Harvard Business School*. The report examined the energy crises of the 1970’s and made subsequent recommendations as to how the U.S. could increase its resilience to similar disasters. Yergin and his co-author, Robert Stobaugh, concluded that the U.S. needed to develop and deploy alternate sources of energy, and that, “the energy crises and price rises of 1973-74 and 1978-79 were not isolated instances but part of a ‘major transition’.”¹ The report covers everything from the need to increase efficiency in automobiles, to projected domestic production rates of coal, oil, and natural gas. While several of the authors’ predictions, namely regarding the future production rates of natural gas, have since proven inaccurate, the piece was nonetheless a valuable contribution to this emerging field of study. Its core points, that the U.S. “cannot rely on one big technological fix to solve the energy problem”, and “American policy should foster a system of balanced energy sources,” are still universally echoed by many in the field today.²

While Daniel Yergin first foray in the energy security was in 1979, his most significant contribution to the field came in 1991 with his publishing of *The Prize: The Epic Quest for Oil*,

¹ William A. Mogel. “ENERGY FUTURE REPORT OF THE ENERGY PROJECT AT THE HARVARD BUSINESS SCHOOL.” Energy Bar Association, 1980. Pg. 1, Accessed September 25, 2018. https://www.eba-net.org/assets/1/6/7-Vol2_No1_1981_Book_Review_Energy_Future_Repo.pdf

² Ibid, 1980

Money, and Power.³ *The Prize* examines the history of petroleum production and utilization, and while it does well to give a broader, historical context to ideas of energy security, it's its sequel that proves most valuable in the field. Twenty years after the publishing of *The Prize*, Yergin released *The Quest: Energy, Security, and the Remaking of the Modern World*.⁴ While *The Prize* was a supplemental history of energy security, *The Quest* is a modern application of its principles. This later book examines issues of energy supply, shale gas development, climate change's effect on energy security, and the new role of great powers on the international energy system. So exhaustive is his examination, that Yergin met criticism for the book's length and arguable inaccessibility. Regardless, *The Quest* serves as one of the most comprehensive narratives of modern energy security.

Since Yergin laid the foundation for this topic area, the idea of "energy security" has been applied to everything from studies aimed at "redefining" national security^{5 6}, to advocacy of environmentally-conscious technologies⁷. However, literature that examines energy security in Central Asia falls primarily into two categories. The first category approaches the subject from a business-driven, capital investment standpoint. In the same way political risk analysis is often pursued by those in the corporate world, and not in academia, much of the writings on energy security in Central Asia examine the subject in ways beneficial to those who may be interested in capital investments in the region's energy sector. Chief among these analyses came from Felix Arteaga of the Elcano Royal Institute in 2010, in his piece *Energy Security in Central Asia*:

³ Daniel Yergin, *The Prize: The Epic Quest for Oil, Money & Power* (New York: Free Press, 2008)

⁴ Daniel Yergin, *The Quest: Energy, Security, and the Remaking of the Modern World* (New York: Penguin Books, 2012)

⁵ Jessica Tuchman Matthews. "Redefining Security." *Foreign Affairs* 68, no. 2 (1989): 162-77. doi:10.2307/20043906.

⁶ Richard H. Ullman. "Redefining Security." *International Security* 8, no. 1 (1983): 129-153. <https://muse.jhu.edu/>

⁷ Xianguo Li. "Diversification and localization of energy systems for sustainable development and energy security." *Energy Policy* 33, 17 (2005): 2237, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.enpol.2004.05.002>

Infrastructure and Risk (ARI). This study examines risks and threats associated with energy infrastructure in Central Asia, from events of terrorist attacks to ageing and ill-maintained energy transport technology.⁸ The second primary category examines the issue as a small piece of a greater, emerging geopolitical struggle. A multitude of literature has been devoted to the examination of Russian and Chinese competition over influence in Central Asia, especially over Central Asian energy resources. Energy security, then, has been examined through the lens of this competition, notably in Roy Allison's piece *Strategic Reassertion in Russia's Central Asia Policy*⁹ and Dianne L. Smith's piece *Central Asia: A New Great Game?*¹⁰ Other literature blends the two categories, such as Yeongmi Yun and Ki-cheal Park's 2010 piece which balanced issues of capital investment with more academic examinations of historical and current Russian energy policy.¹¹

Literature examining energy security in Tajikistan is drastically more limited, and in the case of Gorno-Badakhshan specifically, nearly non-existent, save for brief mentions in greater examinations of Tajikistan as a whole. Tajikistan's most examined energy security topic relates to its vast water resources, and how water politics has been at the center of many of the region's longest political disputes. At the center of these disputes is Tajikistan's Rogun Dam, as its construction would limit the already strained water flow to downstream countries like

⁸ Felix Arteaga. "Energy Security in Central Asia: Infrastructure and Risk (ARI)." Real Instituto Elcano, April 19, 2010. Accessed December 6, 2018. https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/122359/ARI1-2010_Arteaga_Energy_Security_Central_Asia.pdf

⁹ Allison, Roy. "Strategic Reassertion in Russia's Central Asia Policy." *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)* 80, no. 2 (2004): 277-93. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3569242>.

¹⁰ Smith, Dianne L. "Central Asia: A New Great Game?" *Asian Affairs*, vol. 23, no. 3, 1996, pp. 147–175. JSTOR, JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/30172401.

¹¹ Yun, Yeongmi, and Ki-cheal Park. "CHARACTERISTICS OF RUSSIAN POLICIES IN ENERGY SECURITY TOWARD CENTRAL ASIA: FOCUSING ON THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE SOUTH STREAM PIPELINE." *The Journal of East Asian Affairs* 24, no. 2 (2010): 151-74. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23258217>.

Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. Sarah Lain and Raffaello Pantucci examine this energy issue, among others in the region, in their 2017 report *Energy Security Issues in Central Asia and Beyond*.¹² This report mirrors other literature focused on Tajik energy security, which primarily comes from multinational and humanitarian organizations. These groups produce literature focused on Tajik energy security from a humanitarian development focus, examining strategies to improve access to cheap, uninterrupted energy for vulnerable populations.¹³ Such literature was notably produced by Energy Charter Secretariat in its 2013 report on increasing energy access in Tajikistan, primarily for remote communities.¹⁴ Other reports have come from the United Nations, like in their 2012 case study *Tajikistan: Energy Production and Consumption Sector*. This study specifically focused on the effects climate change had on already strained energy systems in the country, and offered paths to mitigate such threats.¹⁵

For such a recently coined concept, energy security has undergone significant shifts in its conceptualization and discussion over the last forty years. Literature attempting to examine and define energy security, especially in the context of a specific region like Central Asia, have evolved commercial and academic understandings of the topic.

¹² Sarah Lain and Raffaello Pantucci. “Energy Security Issues in Central Asia and Beyond.” Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies, May 2017. Accessed December 6, 2018. https://rusi.org/sites/default/files/201705_rusi_energy_security_issues_in_central_asia_and_beyond_lain_and_pantucci.pdf

¹³ Laldjebaev, Murodbek & J Morreale, Stephen & Sovacool, Benjamin & Kassam, Karim-Aly. (2018). Rethinking energy security and services in practice: National vulnerability and three energy pathways in Tajikistan. *Energy Policy*. 114. 39-50. 10.1016/j.enpol.2017.11.058.

¹⁴ “In-Depth Energy Efficiency Review TAJIKISTAN.” Energy Charter Secretariat, 2013. Accessed December 6, 2018. https://energycharter.org/fileadmin/DocumentsMedia/IDEER/IDEER-Tajikistan_2013_en.pdf

¹⁵ Kosimbek Olimbekov. Tajikistan: Energy Production and Consumption Sector.” United Nations Economic and Social Commission of Asia and the Pacific, 2012. Accessed December 6, 2018. <https://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/energy/se/pdfs/gee21/projects/others/Tajikistan.pdf>

Methodology

To determine the potential effects political separatism in Gorno-Badakhshan has on regional energy security, this study will use a modified version of the PRS Group's International Country Risk Guide (ICRG) Framework.¹⁶ This framework was developed in 1980 to predict financial, economic, and political risk for commercial clientele concerned with international investments. As risk assessments have been traditionally born out of commercial necessity rather than academic curiosity, such methodologies place heavy emphasis on economic analysis and financial evaluation. This PRG methodology is no different. For the sake of this research study, then, the part of the PRG methodology only focused on political risk is modified and used. A strength of this methodology is that it was created for this purpose: "One advantage of the ICRG model is that it allows users to make their own risk assessments based on the ICRG model or to modify the model to meet their specific requirements."¹⁷ The ICRG model assigns numerical values based on 22 variables, or "components," (12 components for political risk, and 5 for both financial and economic risk) it understands as the greatest predictors of risk in a country. Each of these 22 components has 3 subcomponents which are assigned numerical values ranging from 0 to 4, with 0 demarcating "very high risk" and 4 "very low risk." These values are then added, run through PRS's proprietary software, and the resulting number indicates a "risk rating" for the country, with 0 demarcating the highest possible level of risk, and 100 the lowest possible level.

This study will modify the ICRG framework in two ways. The first modification to the ICRG framework concerns its numerical rating system. This system will have the original scales of 0-4 and 0-100 replaced instead by a rating of either "low," "medium," or "high" to demarcate

¹⁶ "International Country Risk Guide Methodology." The PRS Group. Accessed September 25, 2018. <https://www.prsgroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/icrgmethodology.pdf>

¹⁷ Ibid, pp. 1

significance. These three ratings will then be given a numerical equivalent of 1 (low), 2 (medium), or 3 (high). Ratings combining two values will also be used, for example “medium/high” would equal a numerical rating of 2.5.

This modification to the numerical value system is meant to simplify the original formula, and account for lack of access to PRS’s proprietary software. However, the primary reason that necessitates this simplification is the extreme lack of data regarding Gorno-Badakhshan generally. Much of this absent data is required to effectively employ the original ICRG framework, a problem that will be later addressed in more detail. This modification is also necessary given the inclusion of 2 new variables (Energy Significance: Resources and Energy Significance: Infrastructure) which have no equivalent in the original ICRG framework.

The second modification is that only the 12 variables of the ICRG’s political risk category will be utilized and modified. While the other two categories, economic and financial risk, are important to investors interested in conducting business in a given country, they are not for this study. These two categories include subcomponents like “Net International Liquidity as Months of Import Cover” and “Budget Balance as a Percentage of GDP” which are either not entirely relevant to the purpose of this research study, or the information required to examine these subcomponents do not exist for a region as remote and understudied as Gorno-Badakhshan. The exclusion of these two categories is not to suggest they bear no influence on political risk, and ICRG mitigates this by including socioeconomic subcomponents in their 12 political risk components. Further regarding these 12 components, this study will combine and exclude several of these variables to end with 6 instead of 12, the first 2 measuring “Energy Significance,” and the other 4 measuring “Probability of Political Upheaval.” These 6 variables have 3 corresponding sub-variables. Though these-sub variables will not be given a rating (as is the case

in the original framework), they are stated to further explain the focus of the “parent” variable.

The full list is as follows:

Energy Significance

1. Energy Significance: Infrastructure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. # of natural resource extraction facilities 2. # of proximate/immediate pipelines, railways, transit routes 3. Potential/planned infrastructural development 	2. Energy Significance: Resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Amount of resources currently being produced 2. Size of resource reserve/potential 3. Resources in terms of monetary value/ export percentage
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Probability of Political Upheaval/Violence

1. Ethnic, Religious, and Social Tension <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Minority discrimination and inequality (both illegal and sanctioned) 2. Ethnic diaspora/distribution outside of home region 3. Events of actualized ethnic violence 	2. Regional Leadership/Power Structures <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Corruption 2. Local control vs. central government control 3. Support of political separatism/separatist
3. Actualized Political Conflict <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Role of central governments in regional affairs 2. Past clashes, violence with central government 3. Past and current political separatist movements, moves toward greater autonomy 	4. Vulnerability to Foreign-born Extremism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Groups in Afghanistan with regional interest/ties 2. Physical proximity to Afghanistan 3. Potential of extremists returning home from MENA wars

Excluded variables found in the original ICRG framework include “Investment Profile” which, “is an assessment of factors affecting the risk to investment that are not covered by other political, economic and financial risk components”¹⁸ and includes subcomponents like “Payment

¹⁸ Ibid, pp. 3

delays” and “Profits Repatriation.” Again, this component might be helpful for an investor or financial group in determining the viability of a proposed project, but not necessarily for determining the chance of political upheaval or violence. Other components like “Ethnic Tensions” and “Religious Tensions” were combined as the two are inextricably linked in Gorno-Badakhshan, with certain ethnic groups almost always belonging to the same religious sects, and vice versa.

The 4 components used in the “Probability of Political Upheaval/Violence” group (The 4 political risk variables created from the original 12), were selected based on both availability of information and according to issues specifically relevant to Gorno-Badakhshan. Again, as is the case with “significance” in relation to energy resources and infrastructure, “significance” in relation to these 4 variables refers to how they contribute to the “Probability of Political Upheaval/Violence.” Their ratings, that range from low to high, refer to the extent to which they impact this probability, chance of political upheaval/violence. As with the necessary simplification of the ICRG’s numerical value system, lack of available data on Gorno-Badakhshan necessitates some simplification of variables used. While the ICRG framework is a valuable base method in determining risk for a given country, it is less equipped at determining risk for territories within countries, especially when a territory is either understudied or information about it is deliberately suppressed by a country’s government. This is the case with Gorno-Badakhshan, as the remote territory is not only understudied, but the Tajik central government has also limited the ability of outside groups to facilitate the collection and analysis of demographic and economic data within the territory.

While the exact split between suppression of information or simple under-examination is unknown, what is apparent is that there is a significant lack of data concerning Gorno-

Badakhshan that would be necessary for completing a standard ICRG political analysis of the territory. Further justifying modification and simplification of the original framework is the existence of issues more relevant to understanding political upheaval in Gorno-Badakhshan than other areas of the world. For example, “Regional Leadership/Power Structures” was created as a component because it encapsulates perhaps the single largest source of political tension in the territory: the contest for territorial power and influence between the Tajik central government and local warlords. This component combines several ICRG base components like “Corruption” and “Government Stability” by either specifically assigning them as a subcomponent, or discussing them in the component’s data section. Other components were created to meet both needs, of topic relevance and organizational simplification. New components like “Actualized Political Conflict” and “Vulnerability to Foreign-born Extremism” combine ICRG base components of “External Conflict,” “Internal Conflict,” and “Military in Politics” for this reason.

To determine if a variable earns a low, medium, or high rating, this study will employ the same method for determining variable values as the ICRG does: “The political risk assessments are made [by their experts and staff] on the basis of subjective analysis of the available information...” Once ratings are determined for all 6 variables, the corresponding numerical values will be added, and the mean of this addition will then be determined to assign a final rating for “risk of political separatism in Gorno-Badakhshan on regional energy security.” This assessment will be supplemented by a discussion of potential future scenarios that contribute to this rating.

Acknowledgment of Limitations

Though accurate risk forecasts exist, any prediction of risk is inherently speculative. A respected, long used methodology like the ICRG relies on “subjective analysis of available

information.”¹⁹ This study will support all inferences ultimately made about the level of risk or significance in the stated variables, but there is inherently no objective guarantee for their absolute validity.

The author of this study does not speak or read the languages used in Gorno-Badakhshan, meaning information that might prove valuable in determining risk and significance values are potentially excluded. Information and research regarding this region is also systematically suppressed given the often-strained relationship between local inhabitants and federal government. Restriction of available information is also compounded by the general lack of information, as latest assessments into demographic and economic information often date back to the USSR’s studies. This combination of factors means the author will make inferences and predictions based on, in the original words of the ICRG methodology, “subjective analysis of available information.”²⁰

Data

Gorno-Badakhshan

Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast (GBAO), or simply “Gorno-Badakhshan,” is a region in eastern Tajikistan that comprises 45% of the country’s total area, but only 3% of its population.²¹ Flanked by China to the east, Kyrgyzstan to the north, and Afghanistan to the south, it is a region of immense strategic and political value, and one marred by a history of conflict and political instability. Comprised almost entirely of steep mountain ranges and high plateaus, the region was a stronghold for rebel groups fighting the Tajik government during the Tajik Civil War in the mid-1990s. GBAO is only accessible to the rest of the country via a single

¹⁹ Ibid

²⁰ Ibid

²¹ “Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast (GBAO).” Oriental Express Central Asia, 2018. Accessed October 26, 2018. https://tajikistan.orexca.com/gorno_badakhshan_region.shtml

road, physically isolating the territory from the reach of the Tajik government. This isolation also extends ethnically and culturally, with GBAO's population comprised mainly of ethnic Pamiris who follow Shia Ismailism, in contrast to western Tajikistan's majority Tajik Sunni population. Such isolation and inaccessibility, coupled with a history and support of political separatism, means the Tajik government maintains very loose control over GBAO. This strained control has led to past conflicts between GBAO's separatists and the central government, a problem that has been recently increasing in frequency and intensity.



*Map of Tajikistan*²²

1. Energy Significance: Resources

Variable Rating: Medium (2.0)

Gorno-Badakhshan, though lacking more common Central Asian resources like oil and natural gas, offers a resource increasingly rare in the region: water. GBAO is occupied entirely by the Pamir Mountains which serve as a headwater for the region's largest river, the Amu

²² <http://hitchhikershandbook.com/2015/09/15/gbao-permit-dushanbe-tajikistan/>

Darya. These mountains, and by extension all of GBAO, hold a largely untapped potential of hydropower. Tajikistan holds 4% of the world's hydropower resources²³ and 55% of Central Asia's water resources.²⁴ Because no specific research has been conducted into the hydropower capacity/potential of GBAO alone, most analyses assume the number to be at least 45% of the country's total amount. Understanding this, the hydropower potential of GBAO is at least 237.15 billion kWh per year.²⁵ Regarding installed potential, GBAO existing hydropower plants can produce over 370 million kWh of electricity annually.²⁶

Despite this enormous potential, the water resources of Tajikistan, and especially GBAO, are tapped at a much lower rate. The electricity generated in the entire country is only about 6.5% of this potential, or 16-17 billion kWh.²⁷ Despite this disparity, enough electricity is generated to meet customer demands. This abundance in electricity and generation potential has led to the country increasing energy exports in recent years. In 2016, Tajikistan exported over fifty million dollars' worth of electricity to Afghanistan and Kyrgyzstan, about 1.3 billion kWh which is 37% more than it exported in 2013.²⁸

²³ "TAJIKISTAN: Accelerating Progress Toward the MDGs by Access to Energy." United Nations Development Programme, 2010. Accessed October 1, 2018. http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/MDG/MDG%20Acceleration%20Framework/MAF%20Reports/ECIS/FINAL_MAF%20Report_Tajikistan_EN.pdf

²⁴ Mette Nielsen. "Hydropower development and poverty reduction: The case of foreign investments in Tajikistan." Copenhagen Business School, March 3, 2009. Pg. 32. Accessed October 1, 2018.

²⁵ "Country Profile: Tajikistan." International Hydropower Association, August 2015. Accessed October 1, 2018. <https://www.hydropower.org/country-profiles/tajikistan>

²⁶ "Research study for the Republic of Tajikistan within the framework of the project "The use of clean, renewable and / or alternative energy technologies for rural areas in Central Asia." United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, 2014. Accessed October 1, 2018. https://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/project-monitoring/5-sustainable-energy/E234/2014_NationalStudies/TJ/TJ_Report.pdf

²⁷ Nielsen, 2009

²⁸ "Tajikistan continued supplying electricity to Afghanistan and Kyrgyzstan last month." Asia Plus, November 22, 2016. Accessed October 1, 2018. <https://www.news.tj/en/news/tajikistan/economic/20161122/233473>

2. Energy Significance: Infrastructure

Variable Rating: Medium (2.0)

There exists a diversity of energy infrastructure in, and proximate to, Gorno-Badakhshan. Within GBAO's borders, the primary energy infrastructure centers around hydropower plants (HPPs). Almost all the region's electrical consumption comes from hydropower, and though residents around the capital city of Dushanbe enjoy near-uninterrupted access to this electricity, those living in GBAO have historically experienced constant disruptions. The Aga Khan Fund for Economic Development (AKFED), along with several other multinational organizations and NGOs, remedied this problem starting in 2002. The groups founded Pamir Energy, a utility company that assumed control over GBAO's energy generation and transmission infrastructure from the Tajik government. Though the federal government still technically controls the company, AKFED effectively governs the entire operation. Since Pamir Energy's creation the AKFED has invested \$37 million in repairing and expanding the region's infrastructure. Pamir Energy has installed 9 HPPs and 13 electrical substations, and over 1000 kilometers of transmission lines. This effort has brought electricity to 96% of GBAO's population, and has expanded to begin exporting electricity to neighboring communities in Afghanistan.²⁹

Pamir Energy has two more HPPs and one more substation planned for development, but the most significant future projects it is implementing is expanded electrical transmission to customers in northern Afghanistan and Pakistan. Transmission of GBAO-generated electricity already serves almost 30,000 people in northern Afghanistan, a number Pamir Energy hopes to quintuple by 2020.³⁰ Though Gorno-Badakhshan contains a significant amount of energy

²⁹ "Pamir Energy." Aga Khan Foundation, 2017. Accessed October 1, 2018. <https://www.akfusa.org/our-work/pamir-energy/>

³⁰ Enabling, 2014

infrastructure within its borders, it is the region's proximity to external energy infrastructure that is more significant. Three primary corridors to the region's west, north, and east contain energy infrastructure, both established and proposed, that is consequential to current and future issues of regional energy security.

Directly east of GBAO lies the Rasht Valley, a rift running north-east from Tajikistan's capital to the Tajik-Kyrgyz border. This valley is where the final leg of the Turkmen-Chinese gas pipeline is currently being built, an infrastructure project ten years in the making. This "Line D" will run from Turkmen gas fields, through Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, across western China, and end in the country's populated east. This Rasht Valley section of the pipeline completes the project, and increased Turkmenistan's annual gas export capacity to China from 55 billion cubic meters to 85 bn cu m.³¹

To the north of GBAO lies the Fergana Valley, Central's Asia's "heart" and where half of its 85 million residents live. The valley is split between Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan and has historically been the source of political and ethnic tension between these three countries. The valley is varied in sources of value, from its strategic location to its productive agricultural land. It is also the source of over 20% of Uzbekistan's oilfields and home to Central Asia's largest oil refinery.³² The Fergana Refinery, located in the Uzbek city of Fergana at the south of the valley, currently has the capacity to produce 450,000 tons of refined oil annually³³, and store up to 6 million tons.³⁴ A new pipeline connecting the refinery to Khiva and Bukhara oilfields in

³¹ Jack Farchy and James Kynge. "Map: Connecting central Asia." Financial Times, May 9, 2016. Accessed October 1, 2018. <https://www.ft.com/content/ee5cf40a-15e5-11e6-9d98-00386a18e39d>

³² Elena Safirova. "The Mineral Industry of Uzbekistan." U.S. Geological Survey, September 2013. Accessed October 1, 2018. <https://minerals.usgs.gov/minerals/pubs/country/2011/myb3-2011-uz.pdf>

³³ Elizaveta Semenova. "Fergana Refinery Plans Group II and III Base Oils Production." DYM Resources, June 7, 2018. Accessed October 1, 2018. <http://dymresources.com/2018/06/07/fergana-refinery-plans-group-ii-and-iii-base-oils-production/>

³⁴ *Uzbekistan Mining Laws and Regulations Handbook*. International Business Publications, USA (2008): 128-131. ISBN: 1433078457/9781433078453

the south and west of the country is currently under construction. This pipeline, which will run north from Fergana to Angren³⁵, will also allow Kazakh oil to be easily transported for refinement.³⁶ Shipping oil to the Fergana Refinery had traditionally been done via rail lines running through Tajikistan, but this pipeline will allow for expanded access to oil and increased health of the regional petroleum market.³⁷



*Map of Fergana Valley*³⁸

The southern rim of the Fergana Valley is Kyrgyzstan's territory and the location of another proposed development that would build an energy network connecting Central Asia to South Asia. The Central Asia South Asia Electricity Transmission and Trade Project (CASA-1000) is an electrical grid that would span from Kyrgyzstan to the north to Pakistan in the

³⁵ Ibid

³⁶ Semenova, 2018

³⁷ *Uzbekistan*, 2008

³⁸ <https://blogs.dal.ca/silkroad2015/2015/09/29/ferghana-valley/>

south.³⁹ The primary goal of this \$1.1 billion project⁴⁰ is to export Kyrgyz and Tajik hydropower to Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, especially during summer months when excess energy is produced.⁴¹ The project represents another example of Central Asian countries' exploration of new markets, and one of many new agreements between Central Asian states and their southern neighbors. CASA-1000 is also one of the first steps in creating the Central Asia-South Asia Regional Electricity Market (CASAREM), an ambitious bid to connect Central Asian energy resources to Indian markets.⁴² The section of this project connecting Kyrgyzstan to the rest of the countries runs the entire southern and eastern lengths of the Fergana Valley, and directly north of GBAO. Sections of this project run within 50 miles of GBAO, and within 40 miles of the Rasht Valley.



*Map of Line D and CASA-1000*⁴³

³⁹ "Projects & Operations: Central Asia South Asia Electricity Transmission and Trade Project (CASA-1000)." The World Bank, 2018. Accessed October 9, 2018. <http://projects.worldbank.org/P145054?lang=en>

⁴⁰ "Tajikistan – Power Generation and Distribution." United States Department of Commerce-International Trade Administration, October 3, 2015. Accessed October 1, 2018. <https://www.export.gov/article?id=Tajikistan-Power-Generation-and-Distribution>

⁴¹ "Country Profile," 2015

⁴² "Tajikistan – Power," 2015

⁴³ <https://www.ft.com/content/ee5cf40a-15e5-11e6-9d98-00386a18e39d>

To the east of Gorno-Badakhshan, a proposed project linking China to the Indian Ocean is moving through development. Part of China's Belt and Road Initiative is the creation of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which is comprised of a series of projects connecting various aspects of the two countries' economies. One such project is a pipeline that would connect the Chinese city of Kashgar to the Pakistani port city of Gwadar. This port city, and pipeline connecting it to China, would allow China to transport Middle Eastern oil (which constitutes over 50% of China's oil imports) more easily to western China. To get oil to Urumqi, western China's largest city, oil traditionally travels from Middle East to Shanghai, and then west, overland to Xinjiang province. This route spans over 6,000 miles, which the creation of the Kashgar-Gwadar pipeline would reduce it to 2,200 miles. This pipeline would have the capacity to transport over a million barrels of crude oil per day, and would equip China to fuel the massive expansion it is currently pursuing in the west of its country.⁴⁴



*Map of the Gwadar-Kashgar Pipeline*⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Zafar Bhutta, "From Gwadar-Kashgar: Crude oil pipeline requires \$10 billion investment." The Express Tribune, May 18, 2018. Accessed October 1, 2018. <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1712888/2-gwadar-kashgar-crude-oil-pipeline-requires-10-billion-investment/>

⁴⁵ <https://sostoday.com/china-pakistan-economic-corridor-and-pakistan/>

Probability of Political Upheaval/Violence

3. Ethnic, Religious, and Social Tension

Variable Rating: Medium/Low (1.5)

A defining characteristic of Gorno-Badakhshan is that it is home to one the largest groups of Ismaeli Muslims in the world. This branch of Shia Islam only has approximately 15 million followers worldwide, 200,000 of which reside in GBAO.⁴⁶ These followers, and the majority of GBAO's population, are part of the Pamiri ethnic group. Populations of Pamiris also inhabit portions of Afghan Badakhshan and northern Pakistan, and this population of GBAO is distinct from the rest of Tajikistan. The west of the country, where about 97% of the populations resides, is mainly comprised of ethnic Tajiks. Unlike their Pamiri neighbors, Tajiks are primarily followers of Sunni Islam. This divide is furthered by distinction in language, where ethnic Tajiks' native tongue is Tajik, and Pamiris speak a combination of Shughni, Sarikoli, Yazgulyam, and Wakhi.⁴⁷ These differences in ethnicity, language, and religion have long been cited in support of Gorno-Badakhshan's autonomy, and even independence, from the rest of Tajikistan.

These differences have led to discrimination against the Pamiri minority by the Tajik government. The government of Tajikistan has routinely denied the Pamiri ethnicity exists at all, maintaining that those populations in GBAO are ethnically Tajik. The government refuses to recognize this ethnicity on passports or official documents, nor are Pamiris allowed into military or law enforcement positions.⁴⁸ Unofficial discrimination from ethnic Tajiks stems mainly from

⁴⁶ Lily Jamali. "Prince Karim Aga Khan IV and the Ismaili Sect of Shia Islam." Public Radio International, July 26, 2011. Accessed October 10, 2018. <https://www.pri.org/stories/2011-07-26/prince-karim-aga-khan-iv-and-ismaili-sect-shia-islam>

⁴⁷ "Alternative Report on Tajikistan's Implementation of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination." Anti-Discrimination Center, August 11, 2017. Pg. 1. Accessed October 10, 2018. https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CERD/Shared%20Documents/TJK/INT_CERD_NGO_TJK_28052_E.pdf

⁴⁸ Ibid, 9

differences in religion and culture. Compared to the Sunni Tajiks in the west of the country, Shia Pamiri are more socially liberal. Women are educated and do not wear head coverings, and enjoy more employment and social freedoms compared to their Tajik counterparts.⁴⁹ Pamiris face social discrimination through the denial of employment and perpetuation of beliefs that Pamiris are not “true” Muslims.⁵⁰

While the Tajik government has enacted policies that discriminate against Pamiris, they have increasingly targeted ethnic Tajiks with other policies. Such policies have included barring anyone under the age of 18 from entering a Mosque, the outlawing of facial hair, and imprisonment of certain clerics and political parties.⁵¹ These policies, the government claims, are meant to curb radicalism, yet many understand them as convenient tactics at quelling opposition.⁵²

While issues of Pamiri identity continue to draw division in Tajik society, the issue of unemployment stands to particularly threaten the country’s social stability. Over half of Tajikistan’s economy is tied to foreign remittances, making it the most remittance dependent country on Earth. In GBAO this is also the case, with both Pamiris and Tajiks leaving Tajikistan to find work in other countries. Russia serves as the primary destination for this migrant laborer, with as many as 40,000 Pamiris living in Moscow alone.⁵³ Almost half of working age Tajik men are unemployed, a number feared to be greater in GBAO among Pamiri men. Over half the

⁴⁹ “Pamiris.” Minority Rights Group International, 2018. Accessed October 10, 2018. <https://minorityrights.org/minorities/pamiris/>

⁵⁰ “Alternative,” 6

⁵¹ “Tajikistan: The Changing Insurgent Threats.” International Crisis Group. May 24, 2011. Accessed October 3, 2018. <https://www.crisisgroup.org/europe-central-asia/central-asia/tajikistan/tajikistan-changing-insurgent-threats>

⁵² Scott Stewart. “Why an Attack by Grassroots Jihadists in Tajikistan Matters.” Stratfor, August 7, 2018. Accessed October 3, 2018. <https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/why-attack-grassroots-jihadists-tajikistan-matters>

⁵³ “Alternative,” 9

country's growing population is younger than 25⁵⁴, adding to an environment already ideal for extremist thought and action to take root.

4. Regional Leadership and Power Structures

Variable Rating: High (3.0)

Current political structures and control in Gorno-Badakhshan took root during the Tajik Civil War. Lasting from 1993-1997, this war still influences much of how the Tajik government operates and prioritizes threats. The war was fought between the Russian and Uzbek-backed central government, and the United Tajik Opposition (UTO) which was comprised of several groups from the Rasht Valley and GBAO. The war left almost 100,000 dead and 1.2 million displaced, and ended with the victory of the central government.⁵⁵ Gorno-Badakhshan's significance in this conflict was not only in its support of the UTO, but of its occupation from opposition forces after the war's official end. Though the Tajik government claimed victory and one of its war-time leaders, Emomali Rahmon, was appointed as the new president, many in the UTO and other rebel groups fled to GBAO to regain strength. These rebel leaders are still pursued by the Tajik government, and continue to exert influence over this remote region.

Today, Gorno-Badakhshan is balanced between the control of the Tajik government and a regional "shadow" government. Though GBAO is designated as an autonomous region, this title "bestows no legal or practical privileges."⁵⁶ The region is technically not autonomous in any legal capacity, though realistically it operates beyond the Tajik government's control at varying degrees. This shadow government is comprised of three or four figures, simply referred to by

⁵⁴ "In Tajikistan, a Bad Time for Unrest." Stratfor, September 8, 2015. Accessed October 5, 2018. <https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/tajikistan-bad-time-unrest>

⁵⁵ "Human Rights Watch Press Backgrounder on Tajikistan." Human Rights Watch, October 5, 2001. Accessed October 10, 2018. <https://www.hrw.org/legacy/backgrounder/eca/tajikbkg1005.htm>

⁵⁶ "Rivals for Authority in Tajikistan's Gorno-Badakhshan." International Crisis Group, March 14, 2018. Accessed October 3, 2018. <https://www.crisisgroup.org/europe-central-asia/central-asia/tajikistan/b87-rivals-authority-tajikistans-gorno-badakhshan>

locals as the “Authorities.” In a study conducted by the International Crisis Group earlier this year, the Authorities are described as, “men [that] participated in the civil war on the side of the UTO and, pursuant to the 1997 peace agreement, received senior posts in the police, border guards and security services. They style themselves as defenders of Pamiri traditions and culture and, given the suppression of political opposition, are virtually the only actors who can claim to be protecting Gorno-Badakhshan’s separate regional identity.”⁵⁷ ICG goes on, noting, “When all is quiet, the bosses compete for cross-border business. When the central government flexes its muscle, ‘they come together again’. If clashes erupt, the Authorities can muster dozens of unemployed youth from Khorog and its environs, in addition to their regular gunmen. They also mediate local disputes and help the needy, supplanting Dushanbe’s appointees, who are viewed as corrupt and dismissive of Pamiri traditions.”⁵⁸ Part of the peace agreement signed at the conclusion of the Tajik Civil War was a policy dictating at least thirty percent of government positions would be held by UTO leaders. Unsurprisingly, the majority of these leaders were assigned to positions in GBAO, far from the Tajik government’s spheres of control.⁵⁹ As ICG has found, however, this strategy to pacify rebel leaders has allowed them to continue to challenge the central government and maintain paramilitary capabilities. Though many of these officials still technically work for the central government, they effectively “ignore” its authority.⁶⁰

Though many residents of Gorno-Badakhshan remain skeptical of the Authorities, the shadow government is largely preferred to Dushanbe’s rule. The criminality of GBAO’s

⁵⁷ “Rivals,” 2018

⁵⁸ Ibid

⁵⁹ “Local Tajik Commanders in Rasht Agree To Lay Down Their Weapons.” Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, October 15, 2010. Accessed October 3, 2018.
https://www.rferl.org/a/Local_Tajik_Commanders_Agree_To_Team_With_Government_Troops_In_Rasht/2191514.html

⁶⁰ “Rivals,” 2018

informal leadership is known to residents, from its involvement in the transnational drug trade to weapons smuggling. Despite this, the Authorities are also understood as “defenders of Pamiri culture,”⁶¹ and the only force capable of contesting the domineering central government. Memories of ethnic cleansing carried out by government forces against the Pamiris are still fresh in the mind of the populous,⁶² as is its currently perceived underrepresentation in the Tajik government.⁶³ This informal leadership, despite its criminal enterprises, offers support and services to the region’s struggling population, “often [filling] in the gaps left by an underpaid, underfunded and under-skilled local administration.”⁶⁴ Though the Authorities are far from benevolent rulers, most of GBAO’s population prefers their rule to that of Dushanbe.

While the Authorities exercise control over immediate, everyday activities in GBAO, a single figure holds greater influence over the population’s cultural and religious ideology. Aga Khan is a title held by Prince Shah Karim Al Hussaini, who is the spiritual leader of the Pamiri people. He is the head of the Ismaeli faith, and whose rule is respected by the majority of GBAO’s population.⁶⁵ Aga Khan also funds a host of services throughout GBAO, include health, agriculture, energy, and infrastructure projects. His material and spiritual support of the Pamiri population is understood and tolerated, albeit skeptically, by the Tajik government. Age Khan allows the Tajik government to barely spend money to maintain the region’s infrastructure and social services. As Ismailism is a progressive sect of Islam, Dushanbe understands that the Aga Khan’s influence does not lead to extremism or militant recruitment, another reason for the Tajik

⁶¹ Ibid

⁶² “Human Rights,” 2001

⁶³ Mariya Y. Omelicheva and Lawrence Markowitz. “A Trafficking-Terrorism Nexus in Central Asia.” *The Diplomat*, June 30, 2016. Accessed October 5, 2018. <https://thediplomat.com/2016/06/a-trafficking-terrorism-nexus-in-central-asia/>

⁶⁴ “Rivals,” 2018

⁶⁵ Farangis Najibullah. “Five Things To Know About The Aga Khan.” *Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty*, August 24, 2012. Accessed October 26, 2018. <https://www.rferl.org/a/aga-khan-explainer/24686969.html>

government's acceptance of the religious ruler's development efforts into GBAO. However, any challenge to the central government's rule, even a positive or non-threatening one, still means Dushanbe regards the Aga Khan as a subverting force.⁶⁶ The Tajik government has also demonstrated little hesitation to bar the Aga Khan's development agency, the Aga Khan Development Foundation (AKDF), from operating in GBAO after times of conflict.⁶⁷

5. Actualized Political Conflict

Variable Rating: Medium/High (2.5)

Politically motivated violence between government and separatist forces has occurred sporadically since the end of the Tajik Civil War. Incidents of violence has increased in recent years, starting in September 2010 with fighting in the Rasht Valley. This valley, which borders GBAO and served as a stronghold for the UTO during the Tajik Civil War, was the site of a month-long battle which left over 60 government soldiers dead.⁶⁸ Government troops were deployed to the valley after 25 UTO members escaped from a Dushanbe prison and fled to Rasht. This prison break was conducted with the help of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), one of the region's oldest militant groups.⁶⁹ Violence in the Rasht Valley began when government forces were ambushed by the UTO and IMU, which left 28 soldiers dead. The ensuing battle also saw rebels down a government helicopter, until fighting eventually ceased later that October.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ Joshua Kucera. "The Aga Khan's tightrope walk in Tajikistan." Aljazeera, August 31, 2013. Accessed October 26, 2018. <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2013/08/2013828121815583542.html>

⁶⁷ "Deep Dive: The Aga Khan In Tajikistan." Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty, September 6, 2012. Accessed October 26, 2018. <https://www.rferl.org/a/transmission-deep-dive-tajikistan-aga-khan/24700508.html>

⁶⁸ "Local," 2010

⁶⁹ "Ben West. "The Tajikistan Attacks and Islamist Militancy in Central Asia." Stratfor, September 23, 2010. Accessed October 3, 2018. <https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/tajikistan-attacks-and-islamist-militancy-central-asia>

⁷⁰ "Local," 2010

Two years after the events in Rasht came the worst fighting since the Tajik Civil War, this time within GBAO territory. The fighting occurred in and around Khorog, GBAO's capital city, and claimed the lives of as many as 150 government troops.⁷¹ This battle started in July of 2012 when the Tajik government sent forces into Khorog after the death of a local government-appointed official, Abdullo Nazarov.⁷² Dushanbe suspected that the Authorities had a part in the official's killing, and used the death to assert more overt control over the city.⁷³ What transpired, however, was a routing of the government forces and their eventual retreat. The battle only lasted one day and was understood as a major victory for the Authorities, and has since given them more negotiating power with Dushanbe.⁷⁴ This event solidified the Authorities' power in the region, not only in the minds of the local populous but of Dushanbe. The central government understands that this event demonstrates the inevitable consequences of overt military action against the Authorities, making the prospect of Chinese cooperation in the region that much more attractive.⁷⁵

Upheaval in Gorno-Badakhshan occurred again two years later, when government police detained the brother of a local warlord in Khorog. When residents tried to free the man from the town's police station, police officers fired into a crowd, killing two. A riot ensued, and the police station and a government official's office were burned down.⁷⁶ The most recent event of

⁷¹ Panfilova, 2018

⁷² Igor Rotar, "Tajikistan Launches Military Operation in Remote Pamirs Region." The Jamestown Foundation, July 27, 2012. Accessed October 14, 2018. <https://jamestown.org/program/tajikistan-launches-military-operation-in-remote-pamirs-region/>

⁷³ Joshua Kucera. "The Tajiks' Forgotten War." The New York Times, June 26, 2014. Accessed October 16, 2018. <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/27/opinion/the-tajiks-forgotten-war.html>

⁷⁴ "Rivals," 2018

⁷⁵ Joshua Kucera. "The Tajiks Who Fight Their Own Government." The Atlantic, June 28, 2013. Accessed October 16, 2018. <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2013/06/the-tajiks-who-fight-their-own-government/277336/>

⁷⁶ Dmitry Solovyov. "Two killed in clashes with police in Tajikistan's east." Reuters, May 21, 2014. Accessed October 16, 2018. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-tajikistan-clashes/two-killed-in-clashes-with-police-in-tajikistans-east-idUSBREA4K0MB20140521>

significant political violence came in 2015, when gunmen killed nine government security members in and around Dushanbe. In a similar move as militants did in 2010, they then retreated to the mountains, this time to nearby Romit Gorge. The ensuing battle left a total of twenty-five militants dead, and raised the number of government forces killed to fourteen.

6. Vulnerability to Foreign-borne Extremism/Violence

Variable Rating: Medium (2.0)



*Map of Gorno-Badakhshan and Afghan Badakhshan/northern Afghanistan*⁷⁷

Tajikistan's long history of political instability, coupled with its almost 1,000-mile-long border with Afghanistan, has continually raised concerns over militant group incursions into the

⁷⁷ https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Map-of-greater-Badakhshan-Map-by-Evgenii-Shibkov_fig2_326455931

vulnerable country.⁷⁸ This fear, however, is considered by some to be overstated, and instead the issue of domestic-borne political conflict is a more legitimate concern.⁷⁹ Regardless, recent gains by terror groups in Afghanistan with affiliations to similar groups in Tajikistan has once again raised this question, as has China's expansion into the region.

Historically, the most powerful and widespread militant group in Central Asia is the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU). The terror group's stated goals are to overthrow the governments of Central Asia, which it understands are ruled by apostates and not followers of "true" Islam, and to establish a Muslim caliphate in the region. Formed in the late 1990s, the group launched attacks against the governments of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan between 1998 and 2002.⁸⁰ Operating out of strongholds in Rasht Valley, Gorno-Badakhshan, and northern Afghanistan, the group fled to the Afghan-Pakistan border region of Waziristan after the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan in 2001. The IMU suffered heavy losses throughout early to late 2000s, but still managed to maintain a presence in Afghanistan and Tajikistan. This presence was maintained, in part, by al-Qaeda and the Taliban's support for the group. Throughout the last two decades, the IMU has fought and trained alongside Taliban and al-Qaeda forces in Waziristan, until an offensive by the Pakistani Military forced many of the terror groups' members farther back into Afghanistan. While the Pakistani Military was successful in killing a number of militants, an unintended consequence of the operation was the migration of thousands of fighters

⁷⁸ Ibid

⁷⁹ John Heathershaw and Sophie Roche. "Islam and Political Violence in Tajikistan." *Ethnopolitics Papers*, no.8 (2011). https://centres.exeter.ac.uk/exceps/downloads/Ethnopolitics_Papers_No_8_-_Heathershaw_and_Roche.pdf

⁸⁰ "In Tajikistan," 2015

to Afghanistan's northern territories.⁸¹ The Tajik government now estimates there to be as many as 15,000 militants operating along Afghanistan's northern border.⁸²

A major setback for the IMU occurred in 2015, just as the group appeared to be back to its previous levels of strength. The rise of the Islamic State in the Khorasan Province (ISKP), the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria's (ISIS) Afghan branch, fractured the IMU into two distinct groups. This fracture initially occurred in June of 2015 when the then leader of the IMU, Usman Ghasi, pledged allegiance to ISIS and ISKP.⁸³ Until then the IMU was allied with al-Qaeda and the Taliban, which were both at war with ISKP. In response, the Taliban killed Ghasi and over a hundred IMU fighters in a 2016 battle.⁸⁴

Since this battle, more branches of the IMU have emerged, some loyal to ISKP and others to the Taliban. The only group to remain loyal to ISKP formed its Moawiya branch. This branch is one of two (the other being the Farooqi branch, made up primarily of Pashtun fighters) that make up the entirety of ISKP in Afghanistan, and is led by a former IMU commander. The Moawiya branch operates in northern Afghanistan and is comprised of ethnic Balochs, Tajiks, and Uzbeks. The Morwiya branch has also seen a recent influx of Uyghur fighters, both from the Turkestan Islamic Party (TIP) defectors and returning ISIS fighters from The Middle East.⁸⁵

⁸¹ Bruce Pannier. "Central Asian Militants Return to Northern Afghanistan." Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty, May 12, 2015. Accessed October 5, 2018. <https://www.rferl.org/a/qishloq-ovozi-central-asian-militants-north-afghanistan/27011640.html>

⁸² Jeremy Luedi. "Under the Radar: Tajikistan on track to be the next Afghanistan." Global Risk Insights, March 19, 2017. Accessed October 4, 2018. <https://globalriskinsights.com/2017/03/under-the-radar-tajikistan-on-track-to-be-the-next-afghanistan/>

⁸³ Ibid

⁸⁴ Uran Botobekov. "Central Asian Jihadists Under Al Qaeda's And Taliban's Strategic Ties – Analysis." Eurasia Review, August 24, 2018. Accessed October 4, 2018. <https://www.eurasiareview.com/24082018-central-asian-jihadists-under-al-qaedas-and-talibans-strategic-ties-analysis/>

⁸⁵ Sudha Ratan. "The Trump Administration's New Afghan Problem: The Islamic State." The Diplomat, April 3, 2018. Accessed October 5, 2018. <https://thediplomat.com/2018/04/the-trump-administrations-new-afghan-problem-the-islamic-state/>

Other terror groups aligned with the Taliban include the Uzbek-majority Islamic Jihad Union (IJU), but most notable among these Taliban-allied groups is Jamaat Ansarullah (JA). JA is the only Tajik-borne international terrorist organization, and splintered from the IMU around 2010. JA has carried out several attacks against Tajik government forces, but their most notable activities have been recruiting Tajiks to fight in Syria.⁸⁶ However, JA is now understood to control the majority of former IMU fighters in Northeastern Afghanistan, and its Tajik leadership has effectively transformed the IMU from an Uzbek organization into a Tajik one. The losses the IMU incurred after the Taliban crushed Ghasi and his followers in 2016 threw the group into disarray. Rendered “a wandering group of militants in northern Afghanistan,”⁸⁷ IMU fighters who wanted a renewed relationship with the Taliban primarily joined JA.⁸⁸ The last Taliban-allied group comprised of a core ethnicity is the Turkestan Islamic Party (TIP). This terror group is mainly comprised of ethnic Uyghurs, and has fought alongside the Taliban for almost two decades.⁸⁹ The group commands over 400 fighters in north-east Afghanistan and is one of the Taliban’s most trusted allies.⁹⁰

Given the complexity of these ever-shifting alliances and ethnic makeups in Afghanistan’s terror groups, it is no surprise that, “[regional] governments frequently use the IMU as a catchall phrase for Islamists in Central Asia who would like to overthrow the regions’ governments.”⁹¹ The group’s name is a “convenient label” that can distort how complicated and

⁸⁶ “IS Militants Asked Baghdadi For Permission to Fight 'Infidels' In Tajikistan.” Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty, January 5, 2015. Accessed October 3, 2018. <https://www.rferl.org/a/isis-tajikistan-syria-jihad-fighters-repatriated/26777220.html>

⁸⁷ Pannier, 2015

⁸⁸ Marlene Laruelle. *The Central Asia-Afghanistan Relationship*. Lexington Books: London (August 14, 2017), pg 144. ISBN 978-1498546546-1498546544

⁸⁹ Thomas Joscelyn. “Al Qaeda’s alliance with the Taliban ‘remains firm,’ UN says.” FDD Long War Journal, August 14, 2018. Accessed October 5, 2018. <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2018/08/al-qaeda-alliance-with-the-taliban-remains-firm-un-says.php>

⁹⁰ Botobekov, 2018

⁹¹ West, 2010

variable the relationships between these groups are. In whatever way its fighters are divided, however, Afghan security officials maintain that there are as many as 6,000 IMU fighters still operating in Afghanistan, the majority of whom are located in the north of the country.⁹² The United Nations estimates this number is significantly smaller, stating about 500 to 1,000 IMU members are active in Afghanistan.⁹³ These estimates, again, depend on how an “IMU fighter” is defined, evidencing that there is no clear consensus as to the IMU’s true strength in the country.

The variety of Afghan-based terror threats, both in the number of groups and in the diverse ethnicities of their members, pose significant emerging security concerns for the region.⁹⁴ These factors are exacerbated by the Taliban’s growing strength in northern Afghanistan. The north of the country has traditionally not been a Taliban stronghold. The group routinely fought battles with local warlords in the region throughout the 1990s, as the north’s populous was, and still is, made up of primarily non-Pashtun residents. These ethnic differences have been increasingly mitigated, as the traditionally Pashtun Taliban has seen the number of ethnic Tajiks and Uzbeks joining its ranks swell in recent years. This surge in Tajik and Uzbek recruitment has led to massive territorial gains along Tajikistan’s southern border, and a quarter of Taliban leadership is now comprised of non-Pashtun fighters. This shifting ethnic makeup has allowed the group to increase its foothold in northern Afghanistan, making the region now one of the Taliban’s core areas of power.⁹⁵

⁹² Abdul Aziz. “Tajikistan under attack from Taliban and Daesh forces.” *Times of Central Asia*, May 9, 2017. Accessed October 4, 2018. <https://www.timesca.com/index.php/news/26-opinion-head/18005-tajikistan-under-attack-from-taliban-and-daesh-forces>

⁹³ Botobekov, 2018

⁹⁴ Frud Bezhan. “Ethnic Minorities Are Fueling the Taliban’s Expansion in Afghanistan.” *Foreign Policy*, June 15, 2016. Accessed October 5, 2018. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2016/06/15/ethnic-minorities-are-fueling-the-talibans-expansion-in-afghanistan/>

⁹⁵ “In Tajikistan,” 2015

Though the Taliban has effectively contested much of ISKP's actions in northern Afghanistan, evolving relationships between the two groups have produced new security implications for the region. This evolution is no more evident than in August 2017 when the two groups conducted a joint operation that killed over 50 people in northern Afghanistan. This cooperation is partially the result of the growing inter-ethnic ties between the two groups. Increasing numbers of Tajiks, Turkmens, and Uzbeks are joining ISKP, many of whom have military experience fighting in Iraq and Syria.⁹⁶ Aside from ethnic similarities, the two groups are also bound by the same ideology: "Despite internal contradictions and temporary conflicts for leadership in the jihadist world, al Qaeda, the Taliban and ISIS united by the common extremist Salafist-takfiri ideology. The purpose of this ideology is the construction of the Caliphate in the world and the struggle with the crusaders of the West." Though currently at odds with each other, such similarities in both physical and ideological capital leaves room for increased cooperation between the two groups.⁹⁷

Tajik membership in ISKP is growing due to the ethnic groups' involvement in ISIS's war in Iraq and Syria. The Tajik government estimates almost 1,500 of its citizens have gone to fight for ISIS in Iraq and Syria since 2011.⁹⁸ The Tajik government has arrested hundreds of its citizens who either returned from fighting in Syria, have attempted to join the fighting, or in some way are affiliated with those who are. This number has increased, as recent ISIS defeats in Iraq and Syria has seen significant numbers of Tajik fighters return home. Such arrests have been made also due to the emerging threat of home-grown terrorism in the country. This threat came to fruition in July of 2018, when a group of foreign tourists were killed in Tajikistan. Those

⁹⁶ Ratan, 2018

⁹⁷ Botobekov, 2018

⁹⁸ Stewart, 2018

responsible for the attack were Tajiks who had pledged allegiance to ISIS, demonstrating that grassroots terror movements have begun to form in the country. This attack is notable because it demonstrates a group that had no material support from ISIS, but were simply inspired by the terror group. This mirrors grassroots terror cells in other parts of the world and evidences the efficacy of online ISIS recruitment and propaganda that has been targeting Tajiks over the last seven years.⁹⁹

Discussion of Variable Ratings

Variable 1: Energy Resources

There exists a clear distinction between the significance of local and proximate energy resources and infrastructure in and near Gorno-Badakhshan. For variable 1, a rating of “medium” was assigned based both on existing resource development and *potential* resource development. If no future development was planned, or if the region didn’t hold over 2% of all hydroelectric power potential globally, it would have received a “low” rating. This water resource is also the sole source of power in the territory, and supplies electricity to almost 300,000 people. However, because this potential is near impossible to fully tap, and its value (for now) is almost exclusively for local customers, it cannot receive a “high” rating. The question of this study examines the effects on *regional* (including proximate) energy security, not just local energy security. Because the water resources of GBAO are almost exclusively being used within its borders, and only proposed and hypothetical developments give it regional significance, it earns a “medium” rating.

⁹⁹ “Tajikistan,” 2011

Variable 2: Energy Infrastructure

This distinction between local and proximate extends to energy infrastructure, and informs the rating of Variable 2 along the same lines of reasoning as Variable 1. Variable 2: Energy Infrastructure also receives a rating of “medium,” as it is pulled by local and proximate values. Within GBAO’s borders, the local energy infrastructure is similar in value to Variable 1 in that it almost exclusively serves GBAO’s population. With exception to planned developments that would export hydroelectricity to communities in Afghan Badakhshan, almost all energy infrastructure in GBAO does not have transnational or proximate significance. Conversely, energy infrastructure projects, both established and under development, that are located in close proximity to GBAO are regionally significant. Lying to GBAO’s east, west, and north are either massive infrastructure developments or regions of current and continuing energy significance. Line-D of the China-Turkmen gas pipeline and the CASA-1000, as well as the proposed Kashgar-Gwadar pipeline all run within 25 miles of GBAO’s borders. These developments are crucial pieces in China’s Belt and Road Initiative, and a particular focus of Chinese security concerns in the region. Line-D brings Central Asian LNG across 4 Central Asian countries, and the Kashgar-Gwadar line could equip China with the energy access and availability necessary to become even more of an influence in the region. Considering the local energy infrastructure rating would earn a “low” and its proximate counterpart would earn a “high,” the overall rating for Variable 2 is a “medium.”

Variable 3: Ethnic, Religious, and Social Tension

The third variable, “Ethnic, Religious, and Social Tension,” receives a score of “medium/low” because while the Tajik government maintains a strained relationship with GBAO’s population, such strains are more political in nature than along ethnic, religious, or

social lines. Still, there exists ethnic and religious discrimination of the GBAO's Pamiri people, and an effort by the Tajik government to crack down on any expression of these identities that it feels subversive to government control. However, the focus of the Tajik government's ethnic and religious crackdowns is increasingly on ethnic Tajiks and religious Sunnis, not Pamiri Ismaelis. Because Shia Ismailism is a relatively progressive sect of Islam, and does not produce the same movements of Islamic extremism as certain Sunni schools of thought do, the Tajik government is more concerned with Sunni extremism than apparently absent Shia extremism.

Another antidote to this form of tension is how divided Pamiri and Tajik communities are geographically. While there exist both ethnic groups in all parts of the country, the overwhelming majority of Pamiris live in GBAO while this same majority of Tajiks live in the western provinces of the countries. GBAO's isolation means there is often limited interaction between these two ethnic groups. This is unique in a region that has, and is, susceptible to ethnic violence. The Fergana Valley, for example, is home to numerous communities of differing Central Asian ethnicities, often occupying the same cities or agricultural land. Limited separation in these cases has led to continual ethnic clashes, violence that is conversely rare between Tajiks and Pamiris. The one social strain that is significant in GBAO is unemployment, which has forced many into leaving the province to find work in other countries. Unemployment is almost always linked to social unrest, which is of major concern in an already politically unstable region. Still, because efforts of ethnic and religious discrimination are being focused more on ethnic Tajiks, and movements of religious extremism are difficult to take hold among GBAO's Pamiri population, such concerns are overshadowed by politically-motivated tensions. This variable earns a rating of "medium/low" because while there exists ethnic, religious, and social

tension in GBAO, these factors do not bear the same significance as others in determining the chance for political upheaval in the region.

Variable 4: Regional Leadership and Power Structures

Gorno-Badakhshan's political history over the last thirty years, as well as its current political leadership, represent the greatest sources of political tension between GBAO and the Tajik government. For this reason, Variable 4: Regional Leadership and Power Structures earns a rating of "high." The Tajik Civil War, despite reaching an official end over twenty years ago, still influences how the Tajik government understands and prioritizes security concerns in the country. GBAO's role as a rebel stronghold during the civil war continues today, with several former UTO commanders still maintaining informal militias and political influence over regional affairs. This tension between the Authorities and the Tajik government is furthered by general, albeit often skeptical, support from GBAO's population. The other major leader in GBAO is The Aga Khan, who's development agency has almost singlehandedly sustained the province's Pamiri population. Pouring millions of dollars into health, energy, and infrastructure projects over the last four decades, this single religious leader holds more influence over GBAO than does the Tajik government. While the Aga Khan and the Tajik government maintain a more functional relationship than between the government and the Authorities, Dushanbe still maintains a high level of skepticism regarding the foreign leader's influence and development programs. Because GBAO is functionally ruled by two primary leadership entities that do not include the Tajik government, the significance of "Regional Leadership and Power Structures" in predicting political upheaval in GBAO earns a "high" rating.

Variable 5: Actualized Political Conflict

The fifth variable, Actualized Political Conflict, receives a rating of “medium/high” due to how instances of politically motivated violence have evolved since the end of the Tajik Civil War. While events of politically motivated violence have happened continually since the war’s official end in 1997, such events have increased in both intensity and frequency over the last eight years when compared to the previous decade. Hundreds of government troops and separatists have been killed in such conflicts, which have spanned both GBAO and neighboring provinces. Instances like the one-day battle in Khorog in 2012 have proven that separatists are capable of contesting, and even defeating, government forces in combat. This was the largest violent conflict since the Tajik Civil War and ended in a government retreat. The rating of “medium/high” is given because while instances of political violence have increased in frequency and intensity over the last twenty-five years, they are not continuously happening. Years have separated these events, but they remain a grave reminder to the Tajik government of actualized separatist power in the country.

Variable 6: Vulnerability to Foreign-borne Extremism/Violence

Variable 6, “Vulnerability to Foreign-borne Extremism/Violence,” is comprised of four key factors. The first two are kinds of vulnerabilities, which can be broadly understood as physical and non-physical. Physical vulnerability includes extremist groups physically crossing borders, and non-physical vulnerability includes the spread and adoption of extremist ideology via avenues like the internet. These two forms of vulnerability must then be examined in the context of GBAO and Tajikistan as a whole.

GBAO is far less vulnerable to non-physical extremist threats than the rest of Tajikistan. This resistance is rooted in the population of GBAO being almost entirely ethnically Pamiri and

religiously Shia Ismaeli. Groups like IMU, ISKP, and the Taliban, conversely, are religiously Sunni. Though the Taliban is increasingly made up of fighters from varying ethnicities and origins, only an extreme few are Pamiri Ismaelis. The Taliban and Pamiri communities routinely fight in Afghan Badakhshan, and cross-border skirmishes occasionally break out between the Taliban and Pamiris in GBAO. This difference in religion also means recruitment efforts by Sunni militant groups would obviously not be effective in gaining Pamiri supporters. Physically, GBAO is vulnerable to extremist groups in Afghanistan. The province shares a near 1,000 km. border with Afghanistan, much of which is unguarded. The only barrier to free movement across this border is the Panj River which acts as a physical separation between the two countries. This river is nearly impassable for at least half of the year, with heavy snowmelt causing powerful rapids along its length. This physical barrier is effective at limiting extremist infiltrations into GBAO, but small groups of determined militants have historically overcome such an obstacle.

Western Tajikistan (the rest of the country) is vulnerable to both physical and non-physical threats from militant groups in Afghanistan. This non-physical vulnerability and susceptibility to extremist recruitment efforts rests on this region's ethnic and religious demography. Unlike the Pamiris in GBAO, western Tajikistan's population is comprised primarily of ethnic Tajiks who are religiously Sunni. Adherence to Sunni Islam makes Sunni extremist ideology pushed by groups like ISIS, ISKP, IMU, JA, and IJU, more effective and supported. These groups are also all increasingly comprised of ethnic Tajik fighters. As discussed in the data section of this variable, ethnic Tajiks are increasingly holding positions of power in these organizations in Afghanistan, leading to growth in cross-border connections, relationships, and sponsors between Tajiks in Afghanistan and Tajikistan. ISIS has also successfully inspired its first home-grown terror attack in Tajikistan in July of this year, proving

propaganda campaigns aimed at Tajik youth have been successful. This online recruitment has been exacerbated by Tajik fighters returning to Tajikistan from Syria and Iraq after fighting for ISIS. Not only are these fighters returning with extremist ideologies and relationships, they are bringing back combat experience and practical knowledge regarding terrorist and insurgent tactics.

Physically, western Tajikistan also shares a long border with northern Afghanistan, albeit a more defended one than GBAO's. Still, physical proximity to northern Afghanistan, and increasing cross-border skirmishes between the Tajik military and Afghan extremist groups, demonstrate a growing vulnerability. This vulnerability is compounded with the changing ethnic diversity of the Taliban and previously mentioned extremist groups, as many groups' foci have historically been on their countries of origin. The IMU, JA, and TIP, while currently fighting and training in Afghanistan, ultimately strive to bring their fights back to China, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. Western Tajikistan and GBAO serve as ideal territories to launch such operations, making these two regions strategically significant for extremist operations throughout Central Asia.

Though all these factors paint a grim picture for Tajik security, the variable does not receive a rating of "high" because GBAO's population is not susceptible to the same strains of extremism found in western Tajikistan, and instead actively fights Afghan-based threats. The Afghan-Tajik border is also becoming increasingly militarized, with China, Russia, and the Tajik government increasing troop presence along its length. Though this may be counterintuitive, as will be discussed later, such presence will combat attempted incursions of fighters into the country. Still, the variable earns a rating of "medium/high" because there still exists relatively

high threats from Afghan-based extremist groups. Such threats rest primarily on growing populations and strength of such groups, and increasing inclusion of Tajik and Uzbek fighters.

Discussion and Possible Scenarios

To ground and contextualized these 6 variables, it is important to supplement their discussions through an exploration of possible security scenarios. Many of these scenarios center on the Tajik government getting drawn into another confrontation with GBAO's Authorities. Such a confrontation, be it a single event or long-term campaign, could leave room for other separatist/militant groups in the west of the country to take advantage of such shifts in government security foci and operations. As demonstrated by 2010 events in Rasht Valley, and 2015 defection and attacks by high-ranking Tajik government officials, there exists ever-present hostilities and subversive groups throughout the country, and not just in GBAO. If the Tajik government began a military operation in GBAO today, it would be more devastating than 2012's battle in Khorog. The Authorities, having won that battle, are better equipped and motivated than ever in contesting the Tajik government. Such a battle would not last a single day like it did in 2012, but could potentially turn into a drawn-out conflict. Such a conflict would then present ample opportunities for not only domestic separatist groups to exercise power, but also Afghan-based militant groups. These foreign groups could carry out incursions into, and through, Tajikistan previously not possible with a more stable domestic security environment. Instability in GBAO, and subsequent government action in the territory, might allow previously impossible operations into Tajikistan and greater Central Asia by these militant organizations.

One impetus for renewed conflict in GBAO rests on the upcoming Tajik presidential transition. This transition will see Emomali Rahmon transfer power to his son, a transition that may offer a room for separatists and political opponents (both in GBAO and in the rest of

Tajikistan) move to gain or exert power. Such opponents may use the inherent instability of a political transition to challenge the government's control across different sectors, especially in GBAO where the Tajik government's control is already strained. The presidential transition may also see action spawned from Rahmon's son, who may attempt to establish himself as a strong and legitimate leader by cracking down on any dissent, real or perceived. This may include challenging the GBAO's Authorities to further Dushanbe's grip over the territory, especially now with rising Chinese presence and cooperation in GBAO. Regardless of who initiates upheaval, the upcoming presidential transition has the potential to spark political conflict throughout the country, and not just in GBAO.

If such upheaval were to occur, GBAO's reliance on the Aga Khan Development Foundation would be the greatest hindrance to maintaining and rebuilding its energy infrastructure. GBAO's entire electrical grid, all 9 hydroelectric and 13 electrical substations, and all future development is almost exclusively under the control of this single entity. The AKDF is already met with skepticism and hostility by the Tajik government and although the foundation has been permitted to develop electricity for GBAO's population, a conflict in the region would see the organization barred from all activity in it. Without the help of the Aga Khan Foundation, residents of GBAO lack the equipment or expertise necessary to fix or re-build this infrastructure, which would be undoubtedly damaged if conflict were to occur. As demonstrated after the barring of the AKDF after the 2012 Khorog battle, a conflict, even when resolved, would likely see the Tajik government not permitting the AKDF to rebuild GBAO's energy infrastructure.

While political upheaval in GBAO would be detrimental to the territory's energy infrastructure and security, the energy infrastructure proximate to GBAO would face greater

threats. This would be initiated by conflict in GBAO, but perpetrated militant groups in western Tajikistan and Northern Afghanistan. A conflict in GBAO, especially a large one during the presidential transition, would strain the attention and military resources of the Tajik government. Groups like the IMU, who's original stated purpose was to overthrow the governments of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, could more readily launch operations into the two countries. The Fergana and Rasht Valleys, two of IMU's historical strongholds, lay less than 100 miles from northern Afghanistan, Rasht Valley running less than 25 miles from the Afghan border.

Threats to regional energy infrastructure north and east of GBAO rest on the growing Uyghur populations of the Taliban and IMU, as well as the swelling strength and numbers of the TIP. Political upheaval in Tajikistan might offer Uyghur militants opportunities to attack Chinese infrastructure proximate to GBAO, namely the Kashgar-Gwadar and Turkmen-China pipelines. Uyghur militants have historically attacked Chinese energy infrastructure in Xinjiang¹⁰⁰, and conducted terrorist operations against Chinese civilians and government officials. These attacks have been used by the Chinese government as justification for recent mass-detentions of Uyghurs in Xinjiang, a move that could increase retaliation from Uyghur-aligned terror groups in Afghanistan. Uyghur militants receive support, and hold membership in, al-Qaeda, ISIS, IMU, and the Taliban. Recent gains by militants in northern Afghanistan has Chinese officials worried that these groups will begin launching attacks in Xinjiang, a key reason for increased Chinese military presence in Afghanistan and Tajikistan.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ Austin Ramzy. "China's Restive Xinjiang Region Hit by Renewed Violence." Time Inc., February 29, 2012. Accessed October 24, 2018. <http://world.time.com/2012/02/29/chinas-restive-xinjiang-region-hit-by-renewed-violence/>

¹⁰¹ James Griffiths. "Al-Qaeda magazine calls for Xinjiang to be 'recovered by the Islamic Caliphate.'" October 21, 2014. Accessed October 26, 2018. <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/article/1621190/new-al-qaeda-magazine-calls-xinjiang-be-recovered-islamic-caliphate?page=all>

Another threat to Chinese energy infrastructure is the increasing number of ethnic Balochs joining the ranks of these various extremist groups. Baloch militants have mounted an insurgency against Pakistani forces for decades, and a favorite tactic of these insurgent groups is attacking the energy infrastructure of southern Pakistan. Between 2005 and 2018, Baloch insurgents have conducted 232 attacks against gas pipeline alone.¹⁰² With swelling numbers of Balochs joining the militant groups of northern Afghanistan, knowledge, tactics, and strategy related to energy infrastructure-focused attacks will spread to these growing organizations. As China increases its military presence in the region, Uyghur militants might turn to attacking Chinese energy infrastructure in other countries instead of within an increasingly-defended China. The Fergana Valley is an obvious target for such attacks, for its historical support of extremist groups, and it being home to the proposed Turkmen-China gas pipeline and CASA-1000 transmission line.

Conclusion

Political separatism in Gorno-Badakhshan poses a “medium” level (2.3 numerical value) of threat against Central Asian energy security. This rating was determined by adding the numerical values of all 6 variables, and then determining their average ($2+2+1.5+3+2.5+3*0.5=2.3$). This level could be most potentially actualized through two possible scenarios: political violence/upheaval in GBAO would (1) pull Tajik security forces into a drawn-out conflict in the territory, potentially leaving room for militants in western Tajikistan and northern Afghanistan to launch attacks on energy infrastructure in and near Tajikistan and (2), hinder the maintenance and future development of energy infrastructure within, and proximate to, GBAO’s borders. The

¹⁰² “Number of Attack on Gas pipeline in Balochistan: 2005-2018.” South Asia Terrorism Portal, June 3 2018. Accessed October 26, 2018.
http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/pakistan/Balochistan/data/Attacks_Gas_pipeline.htm

significance of energy resources and infrastructure within, and proximate to, GBAO's borders, coupled with the probability of political upheaval in the territory, all contribute to the justification of this level. Such unrest specifically hinges on upcoming political transitions within Tajikistan, and the potential for various groups to leverage the inherent instability associated with shifts in state control. Implications for this conclusion are of particular concern for China, as the country has invested hundreds of millions of dollars in energy infrastructure projects to the north, east, and west of GBAO. Unrest in GBAO and in northern Afghanistan affect China's ability to develop its western province of Xinjiang, and the numerous current and proposed projects in Central Asia that are part of its Belt and Road Initiative.

Ultimately, unrest in GBAO, and its associated effects on regional energy security, will draw in more powers than those just within Tajikistan. China and Russia, as well as other Central Asian republics, are all affected by threats and unrest in this strategic corner of the region. A conflict between the Tajik government and GBAO's Authorities would not remain a local one, and emergence of actualized violence between the two groups would constitute widespread regional concern and involvement.

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Curriculum Vitae

John Papatheofanis was born on July 15, 1993 in Chicago, Illinois. He is currently a graduate student in The Johns Hopkins University's Global Security Studies Program. Much of his current graduate studies were informed by his experience as an undergraduate at Wheaton College in Illinois, from where he graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology in 2016. During his time at Wheaton College, John spent time living and working in both Tajikistan and Jordan, applying his sociological coursework to broader issues of international security. This experience in Central Asia and The Middle East was combined with two years of post-undergraduate experience working in the solar photovoltaic industry in Southern California. Together, these issues of energy and international security inform much of John's current graduate coursework.